



## **The European Integration Policy of the Republic of Armenia**

### **Before and After the 2020 war**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the Republic of Armenia's approach toward European integration both before and after the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020, examining the changes that have taken place and how they have affected the efforts of Armenia to resolve conflicts. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan had significant geopolitical repercussions, which caused Armenia to reevaluate its regional interests. The key disparities between Armenia's European integration policies before and after the 2020 war, and how have these affected the country's efforts to resolve conflicts, are the focus of this paper. Understanding how foreign conflicts influence a country's regional integration efforts is important for both theoretical and practical reasons, especially in the setting of fragile regional security and complicated power relations. This study adds to the literature of exploring of how conflicts and regional integration processes interact by examining changes in Armenia's approach toward European integration. The results also provide examination on the possible effects of policy changes on efforts to resolve conflicts and regional stability, providing useful resources for policymakers and academics. By using document analysis to examine the gathered information, it is possible to pinpoint important variations in Armenia's approach to European integration. The study's findings show that Armenia's approach to European integration was significantly impacted by the 2020 conflict. Armenia actively pursued better connections with the European Union before the war through a number of policy measures. The study uncovers important adjustments in Armenia's approach to European integration following the war, including a shift toward regional security cooperation, a reevaluation of alliances, and a reevaluation of the importance of conflict resolution. In the context of Armenia's post-war difficulties, the research offers a nuanced view of the complex interactions between European integration, conflict resolution, and regional security.*

**Keywords:** *Nagorno-Karabakh war, European integration policy of Armenia*

## Introduction

The full-scale conflict that broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has far-reaching effects on the South Caucasus' geopolitical environment (BBC News, 2012). This battle is a compelling illustration of how military conflict may influence how a nation views regional integration. It caused the Republic of Armenia to significantly alter its approach to European integration, which prompted a review of its regional goals and plans.

The fundamental distinctions between Armenia's European integration policies before and after the 2020 war will be analyzed in this thesis, along with their effects on the nation's efforts to resolve conflicts. The research question that guides this paper is as follows: *What are the main differences between Armenia's European integration policy before and after the 2020 war, and how have these impacted the country's conflict resolution efforts?* The evolution of Armenia's approach to European integration and how it affects efforts to resolve disputes is important from a theoretical and sociological perspective. Enhancing our knowledge of the intricate interactions between conflicts and regional integration processes is the theoretical relevance. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how external conflicts influence a country's regional integration strategy by examining the variations in Armenia's approach to European integration. The findings also have societal value since they advise politicians and academics about the effects of policy changes on efforts to resolve conflicts and regional stability.

The research subject on the Republic of Armenia's European Integration Policy before and after the 2020 conflict is critical. Understanding Armenia's intentions and attempts before to the conflict to conform with European norms and values gives critical background for its integration trajectory. Analyzing the 2020 war's influence on Armenia's European integration program gives insight on the dramatic developments that happened. Comparing Armenia's integration policy before and after the conflict aids in identifying patterns and variables impacting the country's reaction to changing geopolitical forces. This study adds to academic debates and policy debates by giving insights for decision-makers and directing future integration initiatives. The war most certainly altered Armenia's strategic ambitions and objectives, which in turn shaped its approach to European integration. The research gives insight on the transformational influence of warfare on the country's integration route by investigating these post-war adaptations and problems.

The paper hypothesizes that the 2020 war could change significantly the Republic of Armenia's posture toward European integration. Before the war, Armenia actively promoted a pro-European integration agenda. However, after the War, the country's policies began to lean more and more toward isolationism and Russia. The endeavors of Armenia to resolve local issues were negatively impacted by this change in tactics. The examination of significant policy papers and public pronouncements and various agreements may show that Armenia persistently pursued a pro-European integration agenda even after the conflict. The country may seem to remain consistent in its commitment to cooperating with the EU and actively sought its aid in post-war conflict resolution efforts despite the difficulties and complications brought on by the conflict. Armenia, attempting to use its aspirations for European integration to further its conflict resolution goals, identified the potential role of the EU as a mediator and backer of peacebuilding initiatives in the area.

However, the war added fresh factors and complicated Armenia's strategy for integrating into the EU. Significant casualties were sustained during the battle, which also sparked concerns about Armenia's stability and security. These variables may have had an impact on the nation's expectations of the EU and its strategic approach to using European integration to resolve disputes. Armenia could have asked the EU for aid in resolving security issues brought on by the conflict in addition to political and diplomatic support. The results highlight the interaction between Armenia's conflict resolution initiatives and its policy of European integration. Both before and after the war, the nation took a constructive stance toward European integration, demonstrating its understanding of the potential advantages of adhering to European institutions, values, and practices. Armenia sought to take use of the EU's diplomatic, economic, and normative power to promote peace and stability in the area by actively seeking EU assistance in conflict resolution.

### *Methodology*

For this study of the Republic of Armenia's European Integration Policy before and after the 2020 conflict, multiple data sources were considered for distinct reasons. One of the sources chosen is the Executive Summary of the "Report of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs." This text is important because the OSCE Minsk Group is critical in managing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has a direct impact on Armenia's European Integration Policy. The Executive Summary gives short insights into the co-chairs' views and suggestions, providing critical information on pre- and post-war policy processes.

Another source for data is the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) - EU Neighbors. This resource is important since it details the EU's financial framework for foreign cooperation, which includes Armenia. We will use this source to analyze the aims and implementation tactics of Armenia's European Integration Policy within the context of EU financial assistance and cooperation programs.

Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part - Protocol on mutual assistance between authorities in customs matters - Final Act - Joint Declarations - Exchange of Letters in relation to the establishment of companies - Declaration of the French Government has also been selected. This document from the European Union establishes a framework for European integration, including rules and legislation. It is pertinent to this study because it provides insights into the larger environment in which Armenia's European Integration Policy functions. Analyzing this source allows for a more in-depth examination of Armenia's integration attempts.

Another source is the European Neighbourhood Policy document, which is a significant EU policy framework that guides cooperation with surrounding countries like Armenia. This document assists in comprehending the EU's strategy to integration and collaboration with its neighbors, as well as giving a comparative perspective on Armenia's European Integration Policy.

The Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) provides the basis for collaboration in several areas. We will examine this document in order to assess the precise laws and pledges associated with the European Integration Policy, as well as to assess progress achieved before and after the war.

The study will depend on a thorough assessment of current policy papers, journals, books, and other pertinent sources to analyze these developments. To assess the changes in Armenia's policy toward European integration, the main emphasis will be on significant policy papers and public pronouncements. The study tries to pinpoint the key variations in Armenia's strategy for European integration before and after the conflict by looking at these primary sources.

This paper uses a qualitative design and document analysis as its main methodology. Examining the Republic of Armenia's policy on European integration both before and after the 2020 war is the main goal of this research presentation. In order to do this, document analysis as a research technique was adopted, building on the strategy outlined by Bowen (2009) in his article on document analysis as a qualitative research method. Document analysis method.

Allows to thoroughly examine relevant papers concerning Armenia's policy of European integration. The paper aims to examine a lot about the dynamics, adjustments, and implications of the policy within the selected time period, which lies between the period starting from 2013, when Armenia made a U-turn to the direction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Gardner, 2014) to the most recent Nagorno Karabakh war in 2020 and the period encompassing the period between the end of the 2020 war with the ceasefire agreement signed in November of 2020 (Commonspace.eu, 2023) until present days. Moreover, document analysis allows a thorough and objective approach to evaluating policy texts. It enables us to extract and evaluate essential material, detect patterns, and reveal underlying themes and trends in the texts. Bowen's (2009) work on document analysis as a qualitative research approach provides a useful foundation for doing document analysis. His method stresses the significance of a complete and systematic investigation, which includes techniques such as content analysis, and document interpretation.

The selection of the two periods also suggests of further analysis and finding correlations between the two scopes after conducting document analysis separately. We will use qualitative comparative design (Ragin, 1999) to compare the policies implemented before and after the war. It examines and analyzes Armenia's European Integration Policy throughout the two selected time periods.

The data gathered will be carefully reviewed to spot any new trends, themes, or adjustments to Armenia's approach to European integration. The detailed policy changes, their consequences for efforts at conflict resolution, and a thorough examination of the study topic will all be covered in depth in the next sections of this thesis. The literature review will concentrate on significant policy papers, official pronouncements, and academic writings about Armenia's European integration program and how it affects efforts at conflict settlement. This study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the European integration policy of the Republic of Armenia before and after the 2020 war and its implications for conflict resolution in the region by fusing the findings from the literature with the qualitative analysis of the policy documents.

This paper is divided into three main sections and a conclusion as well as the next section encompassing the existing literature on the overview of the relations between the EU-Armenia over the years. The first chapter investigates European integration agenda of the Republic of Armenia prior to the 2020 conflict. It gives a historical context to aspirations of Armenia to conform with European norms and values. The chapter also discusses primary goals and strategies of Armenia for strengthening ties with the European Union. Moving on to the

second part, it focuses on Armenia's European integration policies following the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. This chapter examines the war's influence on Armenia's integration strategy and addresses the post-war adjustments and problems. It investigates Armenia's shifts in strategy, goals, and tactics as it navigates the changing geopolitical and socioeconomic terrain. The final part compares Armenia's European integration policies before and after the 2020 conflict. It emphasizes the parallels, variations, and trends in Armenia's approach over these diverse times, considering aspects such as geopolitical concerns, internal dynamics, and foreign forces. Finally, the conclusion chapter presents a detailed summary of the prior chapters' literature evaluation and analysis. It summarizes the key results, draws conclusions, and considers the implications for Armenia's future European integration path.

### *Literature review*

Since the early 1990s, the Republic of Armenia's foreign policy has made substantial use of its European Integration Policy. The nation's goals for deeper relations with the European Union (EU) have influenced the development of its political, institutional, and economic systems. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020 had a significant influence on Armenia's path toward European integration. This analysis of the literature tries to evaluate the writings of various authors in order to comprehend the development of Armenia's strategy toward European integration, looking at both the pre- and post-war eras.

The complex connection between Armenia, the regional powers, and the West is explored by Mirzoyan (2010). Mirzoyan investigates the historical setting and geopolitical forces that influence Armenia's place in the area. The book examines the role played by Western actors in Armenian issues as well as the impact and objectives of regional countries like Iran, Turkey, and Russia. The work of Mirzoyan illuminates the difficulties Armenia experienced in navigating its geopolitical environment while taking historical legacies, power dynamics, and strategic concerns into account. The study's conclusions help us understand Armenia's foreign policy decisions and relations with regional and Western players better.

Armenia's dual participation with both the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union is examined by Vasilyan (2017). Vasilyan examines the benefits and drawbacks of Armenia's involvement in these two regional integration initiatives. The author examines Armenia's reasons for joining the EAEU and the effects this will have on its ties with the EU. Vasilyan talks on the challenges Armenia faces in negotiating its political and economic ties



with both unions, stressing the possible advantages and disadvantages. The findings help to clarify Armenia's strategic decisions and its place within the larger Eurasian and European frameworks.

The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the EU and Armenia is discussed by Khvorostiankina (2018). The main CEPA clauses are examined, along with how they affect other areas of Armenian law, by Khvorostiankina. The author evaluates how the agreement affects Armenia's judicial cooperation, protection of human rights, rule of law, and legal harmonization. The results of Khvorostiankina's research shed light on the prospects and difficulties that the CEPA presents, as well as on its possible impacts on the legal system of Armenia and its compliance with EU norms.

Kostanyan and Giragosian (2017) examine the dynamics and prospects for a new course in the relationship between the EU and Armenia. They examine the historical background and development of EU-Armenian relations, taking into account the difficulties and chances that both sides confront. With a focus on crucial areas of cooperation including commerce, governance, and human rights, Kostanyan and Giragosian offer some useful insights into the possibilities for even greater integration. Their findings underline the necessity for a novel strategy in EU-Armenian relations, emphasizing the significance of shared values, communication, and strategic alignment. The research aids in a thorough knowledge of the present situation and potential developments in EU-Armenian ties.

Tomczyk (2018) investigates the digital barrier between Armenia and the Eurasian and European areas: infrastructure, technological access, digital skills, and legal frameworks are just a few of the issues that Tomczyk examines as contributing to this difference. The author investigates Armenia's difficulties in closing this gap and harnessing the advantages of the digital era. The findings of Tomczyk emphasize the significance of legislative initiatives, financial investments, and international collaboration in closing the digital gap. The research advances knowledge of the particular difficulties Armenia faces in the digital sphere and offers suggestions for viable approaches to closing the gap.

Ayvazyan (2018) examines the changing dynamics and new dimensions of the ENP in the context of Armenia. In order to evaluate the implications and results of this connection, Ayvazyan focuses on the particular instance of Armenia and its participation in the ENP. The author examines the ENP's motivations and goals as well as how they have affected internal policies, reforms, and regional integration in Armenia. The research of Ayvazyan provides insights into the opportunities, difficulties, and potential future changes in the connection

between Europe and Armenia. It also sheds light on the evolving character of the ENP and its consequences for Armenia.

Yepremyan (2018) addresses Armenia's complex security difficulties within the framework of "overlapping authority and multiple loyalty. Yepremyan examines the complex dynamics of Armenia's security environment while taking both internal and foreign issues into consideration. The author investigates the complexity brought on by Armenia's geopolitical setting, antecedents, and local power structures. Yepremyan's results emphasize the difficulties in striking a balance between various affiliations and interests while maintaining national security. The paper sheds light on the subtle factors necessary to manage this complicated environment and offers insightful information on the security problems Armenia faces.

Terzyan (2019) investigates the difficulties encountered during the CEPA's implementation between the two countries. Terzyan evaluates the CEPA's main provisions in terms of their actual applicability in Armenia. The author examines the challenges—political, economic, and institutional—that prevent the agreement from being implemented in a way that is successful. Terzyan's research discusses the challenges of bringing Armenia closer to Europe and on the areas that need development for a fruitful collaboration. A thorough grasp of the dynamics and potential boundaries in EU-Armenia relations is made possible by the work.

Delcour and Wolczuk (2015) look at the political, economic, and security aspects that have influenced Armenia's relationship with the EU. They emphasize the difficulties in successfully attaining a harmonic convergence with EU standards and ideals as they examine the intricacies and contradictions of Armenia's participation with European integration. The complex nature of Armenia's Europeanization process and the conflicts between external expectations and internal reality are shown by the authors' findings. The research advances our knowledge of Armenia's status as a "perplexing" situation within the context of regional cooperation within the EU.

Obydenkova (2011) examines the dynamics of regional integration processes in the contexts of Eurasian Cooperation and European Integration. Obydenkova examines the degree to which regional integration in various places adheres to a similar pattern using the neo-functionalism hypothesis. The author contrasts the Eurasian Cooperation and European Integration's experiences while analyzing the essential elements, procedures, and actors engaged in regional integration processes. The results of Obydenkova's research illuminate the parallels and divergences between these two regional settings and offer light on the usefulness of neo-functionalism as a theoretical framework for comprehending the dynamics of regional integration.

Loda (2016) investigates the function of the EU as a normative force in its relationship with Armenia. In particular, Loda examines the normative impact of the EU on Armenia in regard to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The author examines the methods the EU uses to advance its standards and ideals in Armenia as well as the difficulties and constraints encountered in doing so. The findings of Loda shed light on the influence of the EU's normative authority on Armenia's domestic policies and shed light on the difficulties of norm dispersion in the relationship between the EU and Armenia.

Freire and Simo (2013) look at initiatives of the EU to advance democracy in Armenia. They examine the discrepancy between rhetoric and real execution on the ground while analyzing the EU's democracy promotion plans and efforts. By taking into account the difficulties and constraints encountered during the process, Freire and Simo evaluate the success of EU democracy promotion in Armenia. Their findings underscore the need for a more thorough and cohesive strategy and provide insight on the difficulties in promoting democracy in the EU-Armenia environment. The study advances knowledge of the EU's function in advancing democratic principles and practices in Armenia.

Terzyan (2020) investigates the effects of Armenia's "Velvet Revolution" on both home and foreign policy dynamics. Terzyan examines how Armenia's foreign policy decisions have been affected by the radical changes that happened in the country's political environment after the revolution. The author examines the consistency and change in Armenia's foreign policy objectives while taking into account the geopolitical context and regional dynamics of the nation. Terzyan's discoveries contributed to a thorough knowledge of the post-revolutionary era by illuminating the intricate interaction between internal developments and foreign policy choices in Armenia.

Dr. Rác (2020) offers a two-track approach for the EU in reaction to the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. Rác examines the dynamics and complexity of the war while taking into account the geopolitical factors and regional power structures at work. The author makes the case for a dual strategy that integrates attempts at conflict resolution with participation in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation initiatives. The conclusions of Rác highlight the necessity for the EU to strike a balance between acting as a mediator and a supplier of post-conflict support, taking into account both the short- and long-term effects of the war. The study offers insightful information on how the EU may support peace and stability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The existing literature undertaken for this paper provides important background for looking at Armenia's strategy for European integration both before and after the 2020 war. The

review offers a thorough understanding of Armenia's early attempts to forge closer ties with European institutions, the rationale behind the CEPA agreement, as well as the difficulties and advancements made in areas like the judiciary, human rights, and anti-corruption measures by examining the works of various authors. It also gives insight on how the Armenian people feel about joining the European Union, how the conflict has affected economic and security issues, and how civil society groups have influenced Armenia's strategy on joining the EU.

To conclude this section, we outlined our hypothesis that will guide the paper onwards:

The hypothesis of this study proposes that the 2020 war has brought about significant changes in the Republic of Armenia's approach to European integration. It suggests that before the war, Armenia actively promoted a pro-European integration agenda, but following the conflict, there has been a noticeable shift towards isolationism and a closer alignment with Russia. This change in tactics has had negative consequences for Armenia's ability to effectively address local issues. However, an examination of various policy papers, public pronouncements, and agreements may reveal that Armenia continues to demonstrate a persistent commitment to pursuing a pro-European integration agenda even after the conflict. Despite the challenges posed by the war, the country appears to maintain its dedication to cooperating with the European Union and actively seeks its assistance in post-war conflict resolution efforts. Armenia recognizes the potential role of the EU as a mediator and supporter of peacebuilding initiatives in the region, and thus utilizes its aspirations for European integration to further its goals in resolving conflicts.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes the theoretical framework to be shaped around the Rational choice theory (Quackenbush, 2004; Fearon, & Wendt, 2002). Rational Choice Theory may be applied to the mentioned hypothesis since it can help us explain how states make decisions based on their self-interest and the perceived costs and advantages of various options. This concept, when considered in the context of the hypothesis, helps us to examine why Armenia may have modified its European integration agenda following the 2020 conflict. According to the theory, Armenia's postwar policy shifted toward Russia. Using Rational Choice Theory, we may investigate the reasons behind this transition by weighing the benefits and drawbacks of various integration choices for Armenia. Armenia, as a state, most certainly assessed its interests rationally and evaluated the possible benefits and costs of closer alignment with Europe versus a more Russia-centric strategy.

# **1. European Integration Policy of the Republic of Armenia Before the 2020 War**

This chapter investigates Armenia's goals, advances, and challenges in its quest for tighter integration with the European Union, as well as its influence on the nation's socio-political situation.

## **1.1 Historical Background of European Integration Efforts in Armenia**

Since its early years of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Gov.am, 2023), Armenia has pursued a policy of European integration. The nation has long aimed to strengthen relations with Europe, especially through its collaboration with the EU. Early on after gaining its independence, Armenia concentrated mostly on forging ties with its neighbors in the neighborhood, namely Russia, Iran, and Turkey. However, as it tried to diversify its international relations and enhance its links with the West, Armenia started to turn its attention toward Europe in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was signed in 1999, was one of the significant turning points in Armenia's relationship with the EU (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia 2023). The PCA provided the foundation for closer connections between Armenia and the EU by creating a framework for their political and economic cooperation. Armenia and the EU agreed to cooperate to further democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Armenia as part of the PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part - Protocol on mutual assistance between authorities in customs matters, 1999). The agreement also aims to encourage more communication between the EU and Armenia on a variety of subjects and to foster regional cooperation and economic growth.

In accordance with the PCA, the EU promised to giving Armenia substantial financial support in order to aid in its social and economic development (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part - Protocol on mutual assistance between authorities in customs matters, 1999). This financial aid was intended to boost economic development, combat poverty, and promote changes in the media, civil society, and the justice system, among

other areas. The EU offered Armenia technical help in addition to financial aid with the goal of advancing good governance, human rights, and the rule of law. A variety of measures, including training and capacity-building programs, were used to deliver this support in order to improve Armenia's institutions and encourage more accountability and transparency.

In the development of ties between Armenia and the EU, the PCA constituted a major advancement. The agreement created the foundation for future involvement and offered a framework for further political and economic collaboration. The PCA continues to be a crucial cornerstone for their continuous engagement, even though Armenia and the EU's relationship has seen a lot of difficulties over the years.

Armenia's involvement in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) has been one of the main tenets of its strategy for European integration. As a framework for EU engagement with its neighbors, including Armenia, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was introduced in 2004 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). Through several programs and legislative measures, the ENP sought to advance political and economic harmony, stability, and prosperity in the EU's surrounding countries. Armenia has attempted to strengthen its political and economic ties with the EU as a participant in the ENP. Armenia has benefited greatly from EU financial aid under the ENP. This aid has been given with the intention of fostering responsible government, respect for human rights, and the rule of law while also assisting Armenia's economic and social growth.

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), one of the ENP's main projects, sought to give partner nations financial assistance so they could carry out political and economic reforms and advance sustainable development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). In 2014, the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) was replaced by the ENI, which had a budget of €15.4 billion for the years 2014 to 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

In 2006, Armenia was one of the first nations to agree to an ENP Action Plan with the EU (European Union - External Action. (n.d.). A road map for collaboration in several sectors, including as democratic reforms, the rule of law, human rights, commerce, and energy, was outlined in the Action Plan. The EU gave Armenia's reforms considerable financial support under the Action Plan, including funding for the judiciary, civil society, and media.

Since the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative's start in 2009, Armenia and the European Union (EU) have played significant roles (European Union - External Action, 2023). The Eastern Partnership was established to strengthen ties between the EU and six Eastern European and South Caucasus nations, including Armenia, as well as to promote political and

economic change in the area. The EaP has given Armenia a framework for pursuing its objectives for European integration and fostering collaboration with the EU on a variety of areas. Promoting political association, economic integration, and intercultural exchanges between the EU and its neighbors in the East were the core goals of the EaP. The EaP sought to encourage tighter collaboration between the EU and its eastern neighbors while assisting the partner nations in their reform initiatives. The EaP also sought to advance regional peace and security and assist the partner nations in meeting the requirements for EU membership.

Since the EaP's founding, Armenia has participated actively. Armenia's involvement in the EaP offered a platform for advancing its objectives for European integration and fostering collaboration with the EU on a variety of subjects. To undertake political and economic reforms, advance sustainable development, and increase trade and investment, Armenia has closely collaborated with the EU.

Armenia has tried to strengthen its ties with the EU in sectors like energy, transport, and education as a member of the Eastern Partnership. Additionally, the nation has taken part in several EU-led projects that support regional collaboration and economic growth in the Eastern Partnership area. A variety of institutional structures and policy tools have helped institutionalize Armenia's policy of European integration. The implementation of political and economic changes that would bring Armenia closer to European norms has been one of the country's main objectives in its ties with the EU. The election system has been improved, the judiciary has undergone reform, and there have been steps taken to fight corruption in Armenia in recent years. The EU, which has given Armenia financial and technical help in its attempts to modernize its institutions and bring them in line with European standards, has supported these changes.

The development of commerce and investment has been a key component of Armenia's cooperation with the EU. Armenia has pushed to enhance commerce with EU members and to entice foreign capital into the nation. Armenia has undertaken a variety of economic changes to achieve this, including the easing of corporate rules and the creation of free economic zones. The EU has played a significant role in these initiatives by supporting Armenia's economic growth with financial and technical help.

The Armenian administration has also tried to put into effect several policy changes that are intended to improve economic and political integration with Europe. For instance, the nation has put in place a variety of changes meant to enhance the business climate, as well as governance and the rule of law. In terms of the economy, Armenia's policy for integrating into the EU has emphasized encouraging investment and commerce between Armenia and the EU.

A Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which was agreed in 2017 between Armenia and the EU, aims to strengthen collaboration between the two organizations in a number of sectors, including trade, investment, and governance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

Politically, Armenia has prioritized advancing democratic principles and human rights as part of its European integration strategy. The nation has attempted to put into effect a number of changes intended to enhance its democratic institutions and advance human rights, including the creation of an independent court and the passage of new legislation intended to safeguard human rights.

## **1.2 Key Priorities and Initiatives in Armenia's European Integration Policy**

Armenia has also actively participated in the political discussion between the EaP and the EU. The nation has taken part in a number of important conferences and gatherings, including the 2015 Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga, Latvia (European Council, 2015, May 21). At this summit, Armenia pledged to keep up its commitment to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as well as to collaborate with the EU to solve issues related to regional security.

Nevertheless, despite Armenia's efforts to further integrate with Europe, the nation has encountered a number of difficulties. One major cause of conflict, notably in the Nagorno-Karabakh area, has been Armenia's relationship with its neighbor Azerbaijan. Armenia's capacity to fully integrate with the EU has been hampered by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since it has made it challenging to put crucial economic and political changes into place.

Armenia has also encountered difficulties in its efforts to strengthen its commercial connections with Europe. Russia has played a significant role in Armenia's economy, which has prevented a full integration with the EU.

An important step in Armenia's foreign policy and economic integration was taken on January 2, 2015, when it decided to join the Eurasian Economic Union (Vasilyan, 2017). Armenia engaged in talks and consultations with the EU's member nations, notably Russia, as part of the process of membership. Armenia, made the decision to leave the EU discussions and pursue membership in the EAEU as a result of a number of circumstances, such as pressure from Russia and worries about the potential economic repercussions.

Both domestically and internationally, there were conflicting reactions to the decision to join the EAEU. Supporters said that Armenia's accession to the EAEU would increase economic cooperation with its neighbors and provide it access to a broader market (Magoyan,



2022). The impact on Armenia's ties with the EU and the potential loss of sovereignty, on the other hand, worried detractors. A number of agreements and legislative frameworks had to be negotiated and finalized in order for Armenia to become a member of the EAEU. This involved discussions about the conditions of Armenia's membership, trade restrictions, and rules and regulations that would be consistent with those of other EAEU members.

Following the conclusion of the discussions, Armenia signed the accession agreement and joined the EAEU on January 2, 2015 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). As a member, Armenia received access to the EAEU's single market, which removed trade restrictions and made it easier for member nations to transfer people, capital, and products freely. The choice of Armenia to join the EAEU has an impact on its ties with the EU. Given that it had expended a great deal of time and energy in the DCFTA (European Union - External Action, 2023). and Association Agreement negotiations, the EU expressed regret with Armenia's decision. The EU remained committed to working with and engaging with Armenia.

However, The EU and Armenia resolved to continue their efforts under the Eastern Partnership framework, which aims to improve collaboration between the EU and six Eastern European partners, including Armenia, in order to buffer the possible negative consequences on EU-Armenia ties. The EU and Armenia continued to work together in areas of shared interest, such as democracy, human rights, and economic growth, even though Armenia's choice to join the EAEU had an immediate impact on its prospects for tighter integration with the EU.

The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the European Union negotiating process and approval marked a key turning point in their bilateral ties. Here is a thorough explanation of the procedure:

The CEPA negotiations started in 2015 and went on for three years (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). The negotiation teams from Armenia and the EU had many rounds of discussions and consultations. The discussions sought to create a thorough framework for collaboration that would include a variety of issues of shared concern, including as political, economic, commercial, and sectoral cooperation.

Each party's interests and concerns were taken into consideration throughout the talks by both parties. The agreement was created to promote stronger links with the EU while also taking into consideration Armenia's participation in the EAEU and its duties as a member of that union. On November 24, 2017, during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, the CEPA was formally signed. The agreement underwent ratification procedures in both Armenia

and the EU member states after it was signed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

On April 11, 2018, the National Assembly (parliament) of Armenia ratified the CEPA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). The agreement was presented to and evaluated by the parliamentarians during discussions and debates that took place within the parliament throughout the ratification process. It attracted widespread support from different political groups, demonstrating a shared understanding of the need of strengthening Armenia's partnership with the EU.

On the part of the EU, the CEPA was ratified by the corresponding national parliaments of the member states. Although the procedure differed depending on the nation, it frequently entailed discussions and votes in the national legislatures. To become effective, the agreement needed to be ratified by every EU member state.

The CEPA gave Armenia several advantages. It gave Armenia and the EU a thorough framework for political discussion and collaboration, fostering their cooperation in areas including democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance. The agreement aims to aid Armenia's continuing institutional modernization and promote reform initiatives. In terms of the economy, the CEPA intended to strengthen ties between Armenia and the EU in terms of commerce and investment. It encouraged the convergence of regulatory standards and practices and facilitated improved market access. The agreement served as a foundation for Armenia's economic legislation to gradually conform with EU norms and standards, which had the potential to draw in outside investment and stimulate economic growth DCFTA (European Union - External Action, 2023).

The CEPA provided the EU with a chance to strengthen its relationship with Armenia and aid in it becoming a successful and stable nation. The deal increased the EU's sway in the area and gave the EU a platform to further its standards and principles. In terms of Armenia's relationship with the EU, the CEPA marked a significant development by providing a thorough framework for collaboration and demonstrating a commitment to shared values and objectives. With potential advantages in the political, economic, and social realms, it offered a path for deeper ties of symbiosis and collaboration between Armenia and the EU.

The Velvet Revolution of 2018 (Lansky & Suthers, 2019), which took place in Armenia, had a significant influence on the country's ties with the European Union. The revolution, which started in April 2018, led to a change in the country's leadership and significant modifications to its international and internal policy. Here is a thorough breakdown of how the 2018 revolution affected Armenia's ties with the EU:

Following the Velvet Revolution, a new administration headed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was elected and power was peacefully transferred (The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 2013). The rule of law, democratic reforms, and anti-corruption initiatives were given top priority by the new administration. Due to its alignment with the EU's ideals and guiding principles of democracy, human rights, and good governance, these amendments were well received by the EU. Political collaboration and conversation between Armenia and the EU have significantly improved. The frequency of high-level meetings and visits between Armenian and EU officials increased, enabling a more thorough exchange of opinions on many issues of shared concern (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). The EU responded favorably to the new Armenian government's commitment to democratic reforms and openness, which resulted in an increase in confidence and involvement.

Following the revolution, the EU significantly boosted its financial support for and aid to Armenia (Epc.eu, 2020). The EU promised to provide substantial financial support for the Armenian government's reform plan, which would include initiatives aimed at bolstering democratic institutions, enhancing public administration, assisting civil society, and fostering economic growth. Comprehensive economic reforms were initiated by the new administration of Armenia with the goals of enhancing the business climate, attracting foreign capital, and fostering long-term economic growth. The EU helped Armenia execute these reforms by offering technical assistance, guidance, and financial support. Additionally, the EU boosted its efforts to promote trade and investment, which aided in fostering economic cooperation between Armenia and EU member states.

The ease of visa requirements between Armenia and the EU was impacted by the Velvet Revolution as well (Grigoryan, 2019). The new administration worked to promote the rule of law, enhance governance, and combat corruption. In response, the EU declared its readiness to start a discourse about liberalizing visa requirements and making it simpler for Armenians to travel throughout the Schengen zone. The Armenian diaspora in EU member states saw a resurgence of hope and involvement following the revolution. The new government's emphasis on democratic principles and openness struck a chord with Armenians residing in the EU, resulting in an uptick in interpersonal interactions, cultural exchanges, and cross-sector collaboration.

The relationship between Armenia and the EU has improved significantly because of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia. The EU's principles and aims were perfectly aligned with the revolution's emphasis on democratic reforms, ethical leadership, and openness. A deeper

and more cordial relationship between Armenia and the EU was the consequence, along with improved chances for visa liberalization, higher financial support, improved economic cooperation, and strengthened political engagement.

## **2. European Integration Policy of the Republic of Armenia After the 2020 War**

This research chapter examines the war's influence on Armenia's European integration agenda, examining potential modifications in strategy, reevaluation of goals, and the consequences for the nation's socio-political environment in the aftermath of the conflict.

### **2.1 Impact of the 2020 War on Armenia's European Integration Agenda**

The 2020 Karabakh War was a turning point in the South Caucasus's regional dynamics, having a considerable influence on the Republic of Armenia's and the European Union's integration strategies. This chapter offers a thorough examination of the conduct and developments between Armenia and the EU after the conflict, with an emphasis on the influence it had on their integration strategies. This chapter tries to offer insight on the specific acts done and their ramifications for both parties by evaluating the chronological sequence of events.

The Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, sometimes known as the Second Nagorno-Karabakh confrontation, or the Karabakh War of 2020, was a confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Nagorno-Karabakh issue, an ethnically Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan that had proclaimed independence in the early 1990s, was at the center of the war (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

The loss of territory was one of the most significant impacts on Armenia. Azerbaijan reclaimed control over numerous areas surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh that had been under Armenian rule since the early 1990s as a result of the war (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). This covered nearby regions as well as a portion of the formerly autonomous Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. These areas experienced a displacement

problem as a result of the forced emigration of the Armenian community. The Armenian community was severely affected by the conflict on a humanitarian level. Both sides suffered injuries and fatalities as a result of the combat, including troops and civilians. Many Armenian citizens were compelled to leave their homes and ended up as refugees or internally displaced people. Infrastructure, including residential structures, hospitals, schools, and cultural places, was severely damaged by the battle as well (Stevens, 2021).

Concerns were raised concerning possible human rights abuses during the conflict. Both sides accused one another of committing crimes and picking on civilian populations. Concerns regarding the safety and security of the ethnic Armenian people in the recently taken over lands under Azerbaijani rule were aired by Armenians.

Armenia had enormous difficulties following the 2020 Karabakh War, both in terms of domestic rehabilitation and international relations. Humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of the impacted areas were urgently needed due to the devastation caused by the loss of life, damage to the infrastructure, and population relocation. The conflict also forced Armenia to re-evaluate its foreign policy goals, notably with regard to joining the EU.

Following the conflict, the EU and its member states promptly intervened by sending humanitarian help to Armenia (European Union and Armenia, EEAS. 2023). This assistance concentrated on providing for the urgent requirements of displaced people, providing medical assistance, and restoring vital services. The supply of emergency aid demonstrated the EU's dedication to helping Armenia through difficult times. The EU also reaffirmed the need of maintaining regional stability, emphasized the necessity for a peaceful end to the conflict, and underlined its political support for Armenia at the same time. In remarks, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy decried the use of force and urged talks and discussions to resolve the underlying problems (European Union and Armenia, EEAS. 2023).

Armenia has to re-evaluate its EU integration strategy in light of the shifting regional dynamics as a result of the 2020 conflict. Armenia had actively participated in the Eastern Partnership initiative, which attempted to strengthen ties between the EU and its six partner nations in Eastern Europe, but the conflict brought forth new issues and difficulties. As Russia was instrumental in settling the crisis and keeping a military presence in the area, Armenia had to strike a balance in its ties with both the EU and Russia. The conflict brought to light Armenia's dependence on a single outside party and the necessity to diversify its foreign policy stances.

Despite these obstacles, the CEPA between Armenia and the EU showed their dedication to strengthening their partnership. Armenia stressed its dedication to putting the CEPA into practice and using it as a foundation for its integration with the EU after the conflict. The agreement included directions for expanding bilateral ties, pushing reforms, and bringing domestic policies into line with EU standards and norms. To find areas for collaboration and create joint projects, Armenia actively participated in conversations and consultations with the EU.

In its interactions with the EU, Armenia continued to place a high premium on the economic aspect of integration. Armenia aimed to strengthen its economic links with EU member states as a result of realizing the potential advantages of increasing trade and investment. There have been initiatives to lower trade barriers, standardize standards, and simplify customs processes. The goal of Armenia's entry into the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU was to improve market access for Armenian products and services, and foster economic development (European Union and Armenia, EEAS. 2023).

The conflict brought home how crucial Armenian institutional growth and democratic reforms are. Armenia was encouraged to fortify its democratic institutions, enhance governance, and defend human rights by the EU's political conditionality and democratization agenda. Armenia started an ambitious reform plan with an emphasis on media freedom, electoral reforms, anti-corruption laws, and judicial independence. For the purpose of facilitating the implementation of these changes, the EU offered technical help, financial support, and expertise. The advancement of Armenia's integration with the EU was seen as dependent on the country's dedication to democratic consolidation and adherence to EU criteria.

Armenia had the chance to improve regional cooperation and conversation through the Eastern Partnership as a result of its integration with the EU. Participating actively in EaP forums, Armenia interacted with other nations in the area as well as EU member states. Armenia sought to address shared issues, advance stability, and aid in the settlement of regional problems through regional efforts. A platform for enhancing cooperation and understanding was established as a result of the EU's assistance for communication and cooperation among the EaP nations.

## **2.2 Adjustments and Challenges in Armenia's Post-War European Integration Policy**

The 2020 Karabakh War had a big impact on Armenia's and the EU's integration strategies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023).

While the conflict brought Armenia a number of difficulties, it also made clear the value of closer ties with the EU for regional collaboration, political change, and economic stability. Armenia's desire to use the integration process for its post-war recovery was indicated by its dedication to putting the CEPA into practice, furthering democratic reforms, and increasing economic connections with the EU. The EU reiterated its commitment to aiding Armenia's integration efforts by providing humanitarian help, political support, and technical assistance.

For Armenia's EU integration strategy to succeed going ahead, consistent conversation, cooperation, and reform execution will be essential. Armenia can strengthen its cooperation with the EU and strive toward a bright and secure future by continuing to adhere to EU rules and regulations.

The EU decided to send Monitoring Capacity to Armenia in October 17, 2022 (European Council, 2022). The agreement was recognized at the quadrilateral meeting with President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, French President Macron, and President of the European Council Michel received a response from the EU Monitoring Capacity. The Foreign Affairs Council decided to establish the EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia on October 17th, following the High Representative Josep Borrell's suggestion (European Union - External Action, 2022). On October 20, the first EU observers began their work on the ground. The mission's goal was to keep an eye on the situation on the Armenian side of the internationally recognized border between Armenia and Azerbaijan in order to promote a climate of mutual trust and to give the EU more information with which to assist the border commissions' work (European Union - External Action, 2022).

The main duties of the EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia were as follows: contributed to the stabilization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the EU team kept tabs on events on the Armenian side of the two countries' internationally recognized border by routine and sporadic reporting. As a result, the EU was better able to assist the border commissioners of the two parties in their work (European Union - External Action, 2022).

For a period of two months, 40 EU civilian monitoring experts were stationed there. The internationally recognized border between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been patrolled by

EU observers more than 175 times on the Armenian side (European Union - External Action, 2022). They have helped to stabilize the situation between the two nations and enabled the EU to more effectively assist the work of the border commissioners by objective monitoring, analysis, and reporting to the EU on the situation on the ground.

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) sent out EU monitoring professionals to guarantee a speedy deployment of the EU Monitoring Capacity. The EUMM took operational measures to ensure that its ability to monitor Georgia was unaffected. All lines of operation for EUMM are still operational in Georgia (European Council, 2022). To guarantee stability in Georgia and the surrounding area, this involves a monitoring presence along the Administrative Boundary Lines 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The EUMM in Georgia is devoted to carrying out its mission completely (European Council, 2022).

The second significant player in the area, Russia, which maintains troops and border guards along Armenia's border with Azerbaijan, must be taken into consideration by the observers. It is more difficult, but also more crucial, for the EU to find a way to work with them in light of the conflict in Ukraine. Mutual interactions on the ground may result in an informative information exchange, reduce tensions, and prevent misunderstandings. The formal subordination of Russian soldiers to Armenian organizations ought to facilitate collaboration with the EU monitors, at least on a technical level.

In accordance with their agreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the EU is actively guiding a peace process between the two countries. Four trilateral leaders' talks between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan have so far taken place in Brussels at the invitation of PEC President Charles Michel. The first of them was conducted on December 14, 2021, and led to the release of 10 Armenian detainees by Azerbaijan as well as discussions on how to move forward with efforts to start a peace process (European Council, 2022) The following meetings were held on April 6, May 22, and August 31, 2022 (Radar Armenia, 2023).

Josep Borrell has been in touch with the foreign ministers on both sides on a regular basis. Meetings between the Security Council Secretaries of Armenia and Azerbaijan have also taken place in Brussels, sponsored by the EU Special Representative (EUSR) Toivo Klaar and PEC Advisor Magdalena Grono. In accordance with his mandate and the tasks assigned to him by HRVP Borrell, EUSR Klaar has also undertaken numerous in-person talks with the leaderships of both sides (European Union - External Action, 2022).

The decision by Armenia to accept EU monitors demonstrates that it no longer believes it can depend entirely on its longtime strategic partner, Russia. Azerbaijan has launched three



significant operations since Russia invaded Ukraine a year ago, each of which has improved its military position. Azerbaijan did this because it believed Moscow was preoccupied (Grigoryan, 2023). Russian soldiers and border guards elsewhere in Armenia's borders as well as the peacekeepers stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh did nothing to stop their advances. Because of this, Armenia welcomed the European mission rather than accepting an offer from the CSTO, a military alliance headed by Russia, to send additional troops to its border with Azerbaijan in the fall.

By deploying monitors, the EU is bolstering its mediation efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding their main dispute, Nagorno-Karabakh, which just got started a year ago. Although both nations joined the Eastern Partnership of the European Union at 2009, Moscow dominated the region's outsiders until fairly recently (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). It maintained tight bilateral connections with both of the Caucasian nations and promoted the CSTO in the Minsk Group of Europe, which it has co-chaired since the mid-1990s with France and the United States (OSCE, n.d.). Russia must now take into account Brussels' involvement in its diplomatic interactions with Baku and Yerevan since it can no longer set the agenda alone.

On December 12, 2022, Azerbaijani individuals who had been dispatched by their government and who identified themselves as "eco-activists" began to barricade the Lachin corridor, the sole route linking Artsakh with the rest of the world and with Armenia (Martikian, 2023). The so-called "eco-activists" include civil officials, masked military personnel, representatives of pro-government NGOs, and youth organizations; none of them appear to have participated in earlier environmental rallies in Azerbaijan. Only Azerbaijani journalists working for government-friendly or state-run media are allowed past security checkpoints to report on the blockage.

Since December 12, 2022, the route that connects Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia has been closed to all commercial and passenger traffic due to a blockage by dozens of Azerbaijani demonstrators who are widely thought to have government support. Around 120,000 ethnic Armenian citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh are now unable to obtain necessities like life-saving medicine and healthcare due to the current scenario (Gharamanyan, 2023).

“The blockade has resulted in severe shortages of food and medical supplies, as humanitarian aid delivered by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers has been insufficient to meet demand. Disruptions to the supply of electricity, natural gas and vehicle fuel add up to extreme hardship, especially for groups who are

vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization. This must end now,” said Marie Struthers, Amnesty International’s Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Gharamanyan, 2023).

“The European Union is deeply concerned about the suffering endured by the local population due to ongoing restrictions on free movement and the supply of essential goods,” EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell said regarding the situation in the unrecognized NKR, which has been under blockade for more than two months (Martikian, 2023). Borrell also said that the EU is closely following developments and again called for the opening of the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting NK with the outside world. He added that humanitarian funding from the European Union to overcome the consequences of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict was 3.6 million euros in 2022, transmitted through the Red Cross, the only international organization with access to NK and the ability to move along the Lachin corridor currently blocked by Azerbaijanis claiming to be environmental activists (Martikian, 2023).

### **3. Comparison of Armenia's European Integration Policy Before and After the 2020 War**

This research chapter intends to compare and contrast Armenia's pre-war and post-war European integration tactics, goals, and outcomes, providing light on the influence of the conflict on the nation's socio-political environment and desires for stronger European links.

A number of significant distinctions and parallels between Armenia's European integration strategy before and after the 2020 Karabakh War become apparent. Armenia actively pursued a policy of European integration before to the war, hoping to improve its ties with Europe, especially through cooperation with the EU. The nation concentrated on building relationships with its neighbors, including Russia, Iran, and Turkey, but in the late 1990s and early 2000s it progressively turned its focus to Europe. An important step toward greater political and economic cooperation between Armenia and the EU was taken with the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1999. The PCA attempted to bring Armenia's policies into line with European norms through promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

However, the 2020 Karabakh War significantly altered Armenia's approach to European integration and had a significant negative influence on its efforts to resolve disputes. As a result of Azerbaijan regaining authority over territories that had been under Armenian

sovereignty since the early 1990s, the war caused Armenia to suffer major territorial losses. The forced exodus of the Armenian community and the displacement of numerous Armenian residents were two major humanitarian effects of this land loss. During the fighting, infrastructure, including residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and cultural monuments, sustained significant damage.

Armenia showed a newfound dedication to deepening its connections with the EU after the conflict. In order to strengthen political, economic, and social cooperation, the Armenian government actively participated in discussions and negotiations with the EU. They aimed to improve commercial ties, unify laws, and conform to EU norms and regulations. Armenia's strategic goals changed because of the conflict, with a stronger emphasis being placed on post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. As a result, Armenia's aspirations to join the European Union were complicated by the necessity to reconstruct its infrastructure and attend to the urgent needs of the impacted population. The violence also prompted doubts about Armenia's capacity to uphold stability in the area, which undermined its efforts to resolve disputes.

Armenia continues to hesitantly support Russian mediation in the talks for a "peace treaty" between the two parties. Because they call for the freeze of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia's ideas are more acceptable both for the Armenian government and for the populace in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. As per Azerbaijan's request, the mediation track backed by the US and EU does not refer to Nagorno-Karabakh as a party or a conflict area. The 'corridor issue', though, makes things more difficult. Armenia worries that Russia shares Azerbaijan's desire for an extraterritorial transit route that would connect the exclave of Nakhchivan to the rest of Azerbaijan without passing through Armenia and without Armenian inspections. (Korsten, 2023)

Armenia also shown a higher desire to take part in EU projects and activities. The nation aimed to benefit from different EU initiatives created to help partners and members of the union. This includes participating actively in initiatives like Creative Europe and Horizon Europe. Armenia sought to gain from the information sharing, research cooperation, educational possibilities, and cultural exchanges made possible by the EU by taking part in these initiatives.

Regarding Armenia's relationship with the EU, the conflict changed the South Caucasus region's geopolitical dynamics, prompting a reevaluation of the EU's policy towards Armenia. The EU urged for a peaceful end to the crisis and voiced alarm at the start of hostilities. Although Armenia's prior strategy, which mainly depended on military methods to safeguard

its interests in the Nagorno-Karabakh territory, had its shortcomings, the conflict brought them to light. This required a thorough strategy that included the post-war difficulties and the changing geopolitical environment.

Armenia also demonstrated a renewed dedication to democratic reforms and the rule of law, two fundamental principles of the European Union. The Armenian government put policies into place with the intention of bolstering democratic institutions, encouraging openness, and improving the defense of human rights. In line with the ideals and standards advocated by the EU, they strove to create an atmosphere that promoted political plurality, freedom of expression, and an independent judiciary.

In terms of its efforts to resolve conflicts and integrate into the European Union, Armenia confronts both possibilities and problems in the future. Rebuilding trust, fostering regional peace, and taking care of the infrastructural and humanitarian needs brought on by the conflict are the tasks. Armenia's aims and methods for European integration will probably need to be reevaluated in light of the war's effects and territorial losses. Armenia has the chance to reflect on its approach to resolving disputes and draw lessons from the conflict. The conflict illustrated how crucial diplomatic efforts, communication, and collaboration are to establishing a durable peace. Armenia may use its aspirations for European integration to deepen its relationships with regional players like Azerbaijan and promote communication for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The EU appears to have lost part of its "grip" over the Armenia-Azerbaijan issue after the September escalation, with no forthcoming mediation meetings planned and Azerbaijan increasingly moving toward Russia for direct dialogue. However, during the course of 2022, the EU, in particular, has worked hard to support Armenia's stability through various ways in cooperation with international organizations (IOs) and NGOs. This has mostly taken the shape of development initiatives intended to improve the "resilience" of southern Armenia's vulnerable border districts.

Since the war's end, the EU and the UK have provided funding for a variety of initiatives aimed at boosting the "stability" and "resilience" of the areas in southern Armenia devastated by the fighting, which are still home to a sizable number of Nagorno-Karabakh refugees. These initiatives have a particular focus on entrepreneurship, labor market integration, and catastrophe risk management, as well as psychosocial assistance and social protection. For instance, UN agencies have created foster care programs for kids who lack parental care (as a result of the pandemic and war), assisted local governments in creating community disaster risk plans, outfitted "safe rooms" so kids can continue learning in emergencies, and planned

employability trainings for veterans. Support has also been given to women's organizations and start-up businesses in the Syunik area.

Armenia's initiatives to strengthen regional cooperation with EU members were also an expression of its pro-European integration strategy. The nation actively participated in global projects and platforms backed by the EU, such the Eastern Partnership initiative. Armenia participated in a number of conferences and encouraged discussion on topics of shared interest, including as energy security, transportation connectivity, and intercultural exchanges, in an effort to strengthen its connections with surrounding EU nations.

Recognizing the shifting regional dynamics, the EU can play a significant role in aiding Armenia's post-war attempts at healing and reconciliation. The EU's involvement can go beyond conventional political and economic co-operation and include procedures for resolving disputes, humanitarian aid, and assistance with infrastructure rehabilitation. The EU can contribute to establishing a more peaceful and prosperous region by matching its aid with Armenia's goals for European integration.

Armenia's integration strategy clearly changed to become more pro-European following the 2020 Karabakh conflict. This was demonstrated by the country's increased collaboration with the European Union, involvement in EU projects and programs, dedication to democratic reforms, and endeavors to strengthen regional cooperation with EU member states. These deeds demonstrated Armenia's readiness to ape European ideals, norms, and institutions more closely.

Considering the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, the EU and its partners would be well-served to consider the constraints of their development agenda. The main issue here is a conflict between the tools and goals. The EU wants to help local civil society 'create capacity' for self-recovery so that it can handle unforeseen crises without outside assistance. The southern areas of Armenia require a long-term, conflict-sensitive development plan from the EU instead of a short-term, reactionary one.

One point of agreement was the recognition that both the humanitarian crisis and the longer-term dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be addressed immediately. This conflict has festered for far too long. It may be worthwhile to investigate if Russia and the EU at least share a common interest in preventing a resumption of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia or a further mass exodus in the area, even if the Minsk Group nations are no longer able to cooperate effectively (Turkman, 2023). On the other hand, given that the current conflict has already left a sour and polarizing legacy, any mass relocation would undoubtedly deepen long-standing animosities, having detrimental effects on the region.

In conclusion, the 2020 Karabakh War had a significant impact on Armenia's strategy for European integration and efforts to resolve disputes. Territorial losses, humanitarian effects, and difficulties in post-war rehabilitation were all caused by the war. However, it also offers chances for Armenia to reconsider its strategy, give collaboration and communication top priority, and use its goals for European integration to contribute to long-term peace and stability in the area. The assistance and involvement of the EU will be essential for overcoming obstacles and seizing upcoming possibilities.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study provide credence to the idea that following the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020, the Republic of Armenia underwent a dramatic change in how it viewed European integration. Armenia strongly pursued a pro-European integration agenda before the war, working to strengthen its links with the European Union (EU). This dedication was seen in its attempts to enlist the EU's assistance in efforts to resolve disputes. Key policy papers and public declarations were examined, and it became clear that Armenia's pro-European integration objective persisted even after the conflict. Armenia remains dedicated to communicating with the EU and asked for help in resolving disputes. This showed that the nation acknowledged the EU's capacity to mediate conflicts and promote peacebuilding efforts in the area.

The first outcome of this research that we have is that while Armenia was actively pursuing deeper relations with the European Union prior to the war, the post-war scenario has resulted in a significant change toward a more pronounced pro-European integration agenda. This move is due to security concerns, as the conflict showed Armenia's vulnerability and reaffirmed the necessity for deeper partnerships and collaboration with European allies. Recognizing the importance of security and stability, Armenia has increased its emphasis on expanding its integration with European norms, values, and institutions to protect its national interests and assure a more affluent future. This growing policy posture demonstrates Armenia's commitment to meeting European standards and reaping the benefits of European integration for its socioeconomic growth and long-term security. The data also show how European integration strategy and efforts to resolve disputes interact. Both before and after the

war, Armenia made attempts to align itself with European institutions and ideals, which reveal a deliberate approach to use its aspirations for European integration to advance goals of conflict settlement. This acknowledgement emphasizes how crucial international assistance and regional relationships are for advancing peace initiatives.

Secondly, Armenia's European integration policy after the 2020 war, had a significant influence on the country's conflict settlement efforts. In sharp contrast to Russia, the European Union has demonstrated a deeper commitment to encouraging and organizing peaceful discussions. This contrast is critical because it underlines the European Union's preference for diplomatic solutions, advocating discussion as a way of conflict resolution rather than military involvement.

Another outcome is that Azerbaijan has also shown strong interest in the European Union's peace measures, emphasizing the significance of ending the Russian mission in Nagorno-Karabakh as soon as possible. This illustrates that European efforts to promote peace and facilitate discussions have received support not just from Armenia but also from Azerbaijan, showing the European Union's capacity to play a positive role in regional conflict resolution.

Despite the positive impact of European attempts on conflict settlement efforts, Armenia is aware of Russia's critical role in providing security assurances within its borders. To protect Armenia's security interests, a careful balance between deeper links with the European Union and keeping a stable relationship with Russia is required. Any worsening in ties with Russia might have a negative impact on Armenia's security, highlighting the importance of carefully navigating its European integration agenda.

The results of this study's consequences highlight the necessity of continued cooperation between Armenia and the EU in attempts to resolve disputes. It highlights how crucial the EU's support, resources, and diplomatic efforts are in facilitating a peaceful conclusion. The precise areas of collaboration and support that Armenia is looking for from the EU in post-war conflict resolution might be the subject of further study. Policymakers and academics working to achieve a lasting peace in the South Caucasus region would benefit greatly from understanding the dynamics of EU-Armenia relations, the EU's role in mediating conflicts, and the efficiency of European integration policies in promoting peacebuilding efforts.

In conclusion, this study highlights the ongoing pursuit of a pro-European integration agenda and advances our knowledge of the Republic of Armenia's stance to European integration before and after the 2020 conflict. The results highlight the significance of

continued cooperation between Armenia and the EU in attempts to resolve disputes while acknowledging the potential advantages of European integration for furthering peace processes.



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